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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to ascertain how much time faculty members of library schools and other professional schools spend on research and teaching, how many publications they produce, and their general opinions about research and related topics. Questionnaires were sent to 264 faculty members of the 22 accredited library schools offering doctoral programs and to 106 faculty members in a selected group of professional schools at the University of Southern California (USC). A 53.7 percent response rate was obtained from library school faculty and 57.9 percent response rate for other professional school faculty at USC. Responses to each question are presented in descriptive form for each group separately and for the sample group as a whole. Major findings include: (1) 72 percent of all respondents either agreed or heartily agreed that research is the primary basis for recognition in their field; (2) 75 percent of the library school faculty and 60 percent of the professional school faculty strongly agreed that fields in which research is done dominated the school intellectually; (3) 31 percent of all respondents spend 50 percent of their time for graduate instruction and preparation; (4) 25 percent of all respondents had published more than 15 articles though professional school faculty had published more than the library school faculty; and (5) 39 percent of all respondents were more interested in applied research than in pure research. (JPF)

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RESEARCH AS A BASIS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF LIBRARIANSHIP AS A PROFESSION

by

Martha Boaz

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Research as a Basis for the Recognition of Librarianship as a Profession

by

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This paper attempts to ascertain the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of several hundred university faculty members about the status of research in selected professional fields. Professors were asked to respond to several questions related to the status of research, the value of research institutes and the rather general "state of the art" of research. Faculty members were asked to tell about the amount of time they spent on research, on teaching, how many publications they had produced and their opinion about other relevant or related topics.

Research on this topic began as a result of a request to serve as a panelist on the Research Interest Group program at the meeting of the Association of American Library Schools in Chicago, in January 1976. The author prepared a questionnaire which was sent to faculty members of the twenty-two accredited library schools offering doctoral programs, and to faculty members in a selected group of professional schools at the University of Southern California (USC). The latter group included the schools of architecture, education, law, public administration and social work. Two hundred and sixty-four questionnaires were sent to library school faculty members and 142 persons answered; one hundred and six questionnaires were sent to the other selected professional schools at USC and 61 persons answered, with the respective percentages of responses being 53.7 per cent for the library schools and 57.9 per cent for the other professional schools at the University of Southern California.

Is Research A Primary Basis For the Recognition of A Profession

The first question asked was "Do you agree that research is a primary basis for the recognition of your field as a profession?" The answers from the library schools and from the other professional schools were almost equal in the number of those who "heartily agreed" with this statement. Thirty-five per cent of the library schools and 36 per cent of the other schools checked this answer while 37 per cent of both groups answered in the next question that they "agreed," thus making a total of 72 per cent who either "agreed" or "heartily agreed." Twenty-one per cent "disagreed" amd 4 percent "disagreed strongly." The few remaining persons either had no opinion or did not answer the question.

One library school faculty member agreed with the premise, but explained that it was so "because societies value research orientation not because the research necessarily benefits the profession." Another library school respondent pointed out that research has much greater importance in library education than in the practicing section of the profession.

One professor in the School of Education "agreed" that research is a "primary basis for recognition," but said "it is not the primary base.' Another education professor thinks this "varies somewhat in specific areas of the profession." Still another education representative said, "Research is one of many primary basis. A professor in Architecture said, "Research and practice are totally inter-dependent."

Does Research Confer Elite Status on A School Or Department?

In response to the question, "Do you agree that research confers elite status on a school or department," thirty-five per cent of the library educators responsed by "heartily agreeing" and 54

cent "agreed"; from the other professional schools the response was 43 per cent on each of the two lines with a combined total percentage for these two groups of respondents being 85 per cent in either agreement of strong agreement. Ten per cent disagreed and the remaining 5 per cent had no opinion or no answer.

One library school faculty member "disagreed" with the "elite status" designation saying, "It may cause envy or objection but usually the result is apathy on the part of the professional."

One School of Education instructor agreed with the "elite" characterization of research but said "this should apply only to published research." Another professor said, "The research must be good." A professor in the School of Public Administration said that he "agreed heartily" with elite status conferred by research and commented, "Top universities are judged by their research contribution, not teaching quality or public service or sports ability."

Do Those Fields in Which Research Is Done Dominate A School Intellectually and Politically?

The next two questions asked whether or not the persons answering agreed or disagreed with the sometimes stated opinions that those fields in which research is done dominate the school of University intellectually and politically, of the Library School people, 30 per cent "heartily agreed" and 45 per cent "agreed," with a total of 75 per cent indicating their belief in the concept that fields in which research is done dominate the school intellectually. Sixty per cent of the responses from the other schools agreed with this philosophy. A total of 20 per cent of the combined percentage for both groups of schools disagreed with the concept. In the political area the figure was lower with 53 per cent

either "heartily agreeing" or "agreeing" that there was political domination while 25 percent disagreed and the reamining group did not express an opinion. The consensus was that fields in which research is done do dominate the school or the university both intellectually and politically. In the matter of research "dominating intellectually", one library school faculty member said, "I do not feel that this should necessarily be so." Another library school spokesman said, "It depends on the quality and significance of the research." Still another said that this was "usually" so, but added, (it) "depends on the individual institution." A School of Education professor said, "This tends to be true, there are exceptions." A School of Social Work professor said he "heartily agreed" that research confers "elite" status to the extent that the university views research in this light and journals give preference to research reports for publication."

One library school faculty member pointed out that he thought research dominated the university politically because of the funding and PR possibilities; "this is especially so in the case of sponsored research," said another person, still another said that he "heartily agreed" and commented, "Money speaks; Administration loves it."

Does A Research Institute Provide An Atmosphere in Which the Conduct of Research Is A Primary Objective?

The fourth question was "Do you agree that the establishment of a research institute in connection with a professional school provides an atmosphere in which the conduct of research is a primary objective?" Sixty-two per cent of the library school responses were either in agreement or hearty agreement and in the other schools

73 percent of the responses fall into these same categories, the combined total percentage for both groups was 66 per cent. Fourteen per cent in the combined total disagreed and two per cent strongly disagreed with the idea that a research institute provides an atmosphere in which the conduct of research is a primary objective.

On the negative side, one person expressed strong feelings about the effect of establishing research centers in library schools saying,"...I expect the effect would be disastrous as far as any last remaining concerns for humanity in the library school..." Several others thought that such a center would have little effect on curriculum, research or publications.

One library school dean commenting on publications expressed the need for more "but better quality publications..too much junk appearing as 'research'." He went on to say that he thought an "identification of problems to be very important at this time" and he reiterated his position that "too much time is spent on trivial research, we must have quality."

Several people commented on the need for secretarial assisance, computer line and photocopying facilities as essential "back up" for research activities.

Another library school dean, speaking for the present research centers in library schools said, "they do not seem to have lived up to their promise." One piece of advice could be taken from another person's statement that the research center would be beneficial "only if planned cooperatively and clearly funded."

A positive, affirmative attitude toward the value of a

Research center, depending on relative conditions, was expressed by a library educator who said, "If the Center takes a systematic view of the professional area, it can greatly benefit the school's curriculum, instructional approaches, etc....If the Center does relevant quality work, it will effect positively the research environment." Another library school teacher thought a research institute would be beneficial for the school's curriculum by making "theoretical study more visible as part of the educational process, "it would have a "positive" effect on publications and would "provide continual, visible stimulus and opportunity" to research activities.

In agreement with these concepts, another library school professor said a research center would "hopefully permeate the contextual structure of every course." A library school dean commented that such a center "would provide significant input to improve the quality of instruction and increase intellectual challenge in the curriculum." He noted that "too much time and energy of faculty is currently wasted in sterile, unproductive curriculum revision which results in 'new courses' that turn out simply to be the old courses with new names." He affirmed his belief that a research center "would provide focus, status and continuity for investigations presently fragmented, poorly organized and unsustained."

One library school respondent said he agreed with the concept that a research institute in a library school would provide an atmosphere in which the conduct of research is a primary objective, but he added, "I wish there was more of a causal connection between having a research institute in-house and a faculty that is more

research oriented." Another library school dean said about the research institute, "I suspect such a unit tends to lend status to research and to provide a focus for organized effort."

One library school faculty member agreed on the desirability of a research institute, but felt that it might drain faculty from the equally important task of teaching. Another said he agreed with the concept, but he added a condition, "if the institute does research. Quite a few, I know of, only talk about research."

In agreement with these general ideas another library educator said that if a library school had a research center, "new ides would be incorporated in teaching more quickly, faculty publications would increase and faculty interest in research would be substantially increased."

Another opinion was that a research center would "bring the case study and new theories into the classroom attract better faculty, attract money to support students, attract better students, stimulate demand for research methods courses, and increase emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of the profession."

Still another library school professor said he thought a research center would have an enriching effect on classroom teaching because of the extra depth gained by teachers who were involved in research. He also thought there would be increased research and more publications. A library School dean thouhgt a research institute "could be of major import" in a school, "depending on circumstances."

One library educator favoring the research center said that it would upgrade the curriculum, and would give faculty and students

"a visible example of applied research in action and a chance to work with this; it would provide funding for research leading to publication; it could 'break down' major research projects into manageable pieces and make relevant approaches; "it would provide" credibility for attracting funds and focusing interest."

One professor summed up the advantages of a research center in his general statement that the research activities in such a center "would enhance library science's contribution to the expansion of human knowledge and, conceivably, the improvement of human existence."

Academic and Biographical Data of Respondents

Academic and biographical data indicated that the persons answering the questionnaire fell into various academic ranks in both the library schools and the other professional schools. The rank of the largest number was that of assistant professor, this category making up 33 per cent of the total, the next largest group fell into the professor rank, or 25 per cent of the total and with 41 per cent of these being in other schools while only 18 per cent were in library schools; 19 per cent of the total were associate professors, 4 per cent were deans, and other ranks were in the smaller figures. Twenty per cent of the respondents had served as a department chiarman for over one year while 74 per cent had never served in this capacity. Most of the persons answering, who hold research degrees (the Ph.D.), had earned these in recent years. Thirty-six per cent of the respondents has earned the doctorate between 1970-75, 15 per cent between 1960-69, 8 per cent between 1950-59 and only 5 per cent of the remaining persons hold the doctorate and these had been earned between 1930-50. These figures demonstrate that the doctoral or research degree is more common now

than in former years. This may indicate more interest in research or it may mean that advanced the degree is now needed somewhat as a "union card" in a profession.

How Faculty Members Spend Their Time; Actual and Ideal Divisions of Time on Professional Activities

In order to ascertain the actual division of time spent by the faculty members or professional activities during the academic year and what they considered to be the ideal division of time in their capacity as university professors, each was asked to fill in the two categories of "actual" and "ideal" in relation to the following types of activity: (1) graduate instruction and preparation (including directing research of advanced degree students); (2) research and writing; (3) academic administration; (4) professional activities outside the university (i.e. attending conferences, speaking, consulting, etc.) and, (5) other.

Thirty-one per cent of the faculty members actually spend 50 per cent of their time on graduate instruction and preparation; however, 63 per cent of them think it would be ideal to sepnd 50 per cent of their time in this area. The reamining percentages were scattered between 5-90 per cent of actual and ideal time. Going on to research and writing, it was revealed that 50 per cent of the faculty members responding actually spend 10 per cent of their time on research and writing while 31 per cent of the respondents specified an ideal time for this would be 30 per cent. The reamining percentages ranged from 5-90 per cent time actually" spent and ideal time.

As for academic administration, 60 per cent of the faculty actually spend 5 to 10 per cent of their time on academic administration and 81 per cent consider this 5 to 10 per cent to be ideal.

On professional activities outside the university, 90 per cent of the professors actually spend 5 to 10 per cent of their time and 95 per cent of them think this is an ideal amount of time for these activities. Seventeen per cent of the faculties actually spend 5 to 10 per cent of their time on other activities.

Overall, most of the faculty members prefer 50 per cent of thier time for graduate instruction and preparation, 30 per cent for research and writing, 10 per cent for academic administration and 10 per cent for professional activities.

Teaching and Research Insterests

As already indicated the respondents expressed more interest in teaching than in research. Combined totals showed that only 2 per cent were heavily interested in research, 21 per cent were interested more in research than in teaching, 31 per cent were interested equally in research and teaching while 32 per cent were "more" interested in teaching and 13 per cent "heavily" interested in teaching.

Principal Support For Faculty Members' Research Activities

Asked whether or not they had received financial support for research in the last two years, 17 per cent of the library school faculty members said they had received support from federal agencies while 30 per cent of the faculty members of other professional schools said they had received support from the same sources. Both groups received much less from state or local government agencies, with their combined total percentage being 11 per cent. From private foundations only 11 per cent of library school people received money while again 25 per cent of the other professional school people were financially assisted. But 25 per cent of library school personnel received institutional or departmental support as compared

with 18 per cent of the staff members supported in other schools. On the whole, other professional schools received more financial support from outside agencies than did the library schools, but the combined percentage of all the schools from all sources was not impressive, as 46 per cent of the total received no support for research.

Number of Faculty Articles in Professional Journals

"How amny articles have you published in professional journals?" To this question 25 per cent of the two groups had published more than 15 articles and 29 per cent had published between 5 and 10; the other professional schools made a better showing than the library schools, with 44 per cent of them having 5-10 publications as compared to 23 per cent of the library schools in this category.

The library schools and other professional schools were much closer together in their answers to "How many of your professional writings have been published or accepted for publication in the last two years?" A combined total for both showed that only 4 per cent had more than 10 publications in the two year period, 16 per cent had between 5-10, 27 per cent had 3-4, 35 per cent had 1-2 and 17 per cent had none. The largest cluster, 39 per cent, fell into the 1-4 group.

Current Research Activity of Faculty Members

The amount of current research activity of all the respondents was limited with combined totals of only 17 per cent from all schools saying that they had "many current publications," 15 per cent had "no recent publications" and 19 per cent had "no publications yet."

Several deans said that they have no time to do research.

One acting library school dean said that "zero hours" had been spent on research during the deanship, although the same person has been engaged full-time in research at an earlier date. (Maybe this says somethings about dean or about their jobs. We would be a dean!)

Type of Research Interest - Pure, Practical, Both?

The question was asked as to the respondents' types of research interest -- pure (basic) or practical (applied) -- and these were defined as follows: In pure research the investigator may attach any problem anywhere that appeals to him. After he has selected his problem he need only apply scholarly methods to the solution and publish the results, with no concern about any practical social use of his findings. In practical research the problem is localized within practice and the results are to be applied to the improvement of practice.

Only 2 per cent of all the respondents were interested exclusively in pure research, 19 per cent were more interested in pure than in practical, 26 per cent were interested equally in both, 39 per cent were more interested in the practical than pure, 5 per cent were exclusively interested in the practical and there was no answer from the reamining people on this question. Thus, this survey shows that almost twice as many people had more interest in practical than in pure research.

Im commenting on a choice between basic and applied research, one library school faculty member said, "You can't have one without the other. Uses of results may differ, but research as reflective inquiry is what it is in any purposive context."

Another library educator said, "A good researcher in any field should, in my opinion, sepnd some time involved in both basic and applied research." This professor added another important statement which may shock librarians, information scientists, and library educators into action. This statement was "There is very, very little pure research done in library and information science....people in our profession are just not used to doing research for the sake of research with no practical application in mind. This attitude must change if we are to become a profession noted for research."

Is "Demonstrated Research Ability" An Important Requirement for a Faculty Candidate?

The faculty members of both the library schools and of the other professional schools considered "demonstrated research ability" to be one of the first requirements of the faculty candidate. Thirty-six per cent of them felt that this research ability was of "heavy importance" and 51 per cent thought it to be "of importance." One library school dean marked "heavy importance" as his answer, but qualified it by saying, "For junior rank appointments 'research potential' is more often the basis for evaluation."

In the "comment" section of this part of the questionnaire, several library school faculty members spoke of the importance of teaching; one said "Our primary business is still the training of practioners, with various levels of expertise, and research ideally should be directed towards ends that can help these practitioners and students or improve our abilities to train them." Another library school teacher commented: "We need some researchers as well as other competencies, a balanced faculty." Somewhat the same philosophy was expressed by a faculty member from the School

of Social Work.

One library school professor who considered demonstrated research ability to be of great importance for a faculty candidate noted that "Research ability demonstrates intellectual curoisity, self-activation and self-discipline of a personal commitment rather than group activity."

One library school teacher said that he would have marked "demonstrated research ability" as of heavy importance "except that in library education, such people are as rare as hen's teeth. Ideally, however, new faculty should be excellent researchers."

A library school dean described the position of his institution in relation to demonstrated research ability: "If a candidate for a position indicated no research interest, he will be informed that this university demands some evidence of scholarly output in short order, and on a continuing basis."

Is Research in Other Disciplines Applicable to Research in Librarianship?

Three questions were directed to library schools only. The first of these was "Do you agree that librarianship does not stand alone, that it is derivative and should be vitally concerned with research in other disciplines that holds promise of being applicable to research in librarianship?" Fifty-three per cent of the library school people "strongly agreed" with this statement and 25 per cent "agreed" with it. Only 4 per center disagreed and the remaining respondents did not answer.

One library school teacher felt it was important to find out what people in other field think of research in library science saying, "my own guess is that some of what we call research is simply not recognized in other fields..." (and) "I am personally

dismayed that librarianship largely ignores research techniques from other fields that would be valid and applicable..." One teacher stressed the need for research studies which would identify and "provide better services for user communities hitherto unknown, unappreciated, or unaware of us."

The second question which was directed specifically to library school faculty members asked whether they agreed "that the research papers done by graduates of doctoral programs have had little influence on librarianship." Thirteen per cent "strongly agreed", 37 per cent "agreed", while 20 per cent disagreed and 5 per cent "strongly disagreed," but the conclusion was that twice as many agreed than disagreed with the statement. One faculty member added an encouraging note: "Very few of them have much influence, but those few seem to exert a great deal of influence."

Asked what areas in librarianship should be of first importance for research study, the answers selected from a list on the questionnaire fell into the following order, with the first in importance being listed first here and the others following in respective order of importance (according to the respondents' ratings: knowledge and social organization, communication, library administration, man-machine relationships, political environment of the library, and education of librarians. It should be noted that the author is well aware of the limitations of this list; it is hoped, however, that the responses may serve as a general guide to research topics which should or could be explored.

One library education leader, Kenneth Shaffer, concluded his comments with a summarizing and important statement for the entire

profession when he said, "Both the professor of library science and the professional practitioner should have something to profess. Furthermore, both need input to teaching or to their library work through research, writing, speaking, activities in professional organizations or significance, consultant work, etc. While this provides input and authority to the individual, it also establishes both his reputation and that of the school of library science or library."

Summary

A comment which, in the opinion of the author, seems important and should be quoted precisely was made by C.H. Rawski, of the Case Western Reserve Library School faculty.

> "Permit me to offer these general remarks on the central issues of research as they related to the problem area of a service profession and the educational requirements in support of such a profession. If we accept for research serving a profession (as I think we must) C. S. Peirce's position that our science is determined by the problem area and its problems, it follows that the issue is not what, at one time or another, might come in handy for the professional librarian to know. The issue is what he must know in order to function effectively in his profession and to continue to do so when faced with change and a rapidly increasing speed of change. Thus, when it comes to research, he must first of all be able to (a) grasp what is the case or problem in order to (b) ascertain what is needed in terms of (a) and (c) know how to find what is needed (and, in certain instances, but not necessarily, know how to use that which is needed). Problem analysis and grasp of relevant facts alone permit the development of the right strategy -- from which follow by entailment the various tactics and techniques we need. This sequence is not reversible. It may be nice if the librarian researcher faced, e.g., with a problem requiring non-parametric statistics in the course of inquiry, can expertly handle these techniques. But it is disastrous if he is unable to analyze his problem and ascertain the terms which require the use of these or any other techniques (which vary from problem to problem and often are supplied more effectively by experts). What counts is the ability of the librarian-researcher to ascertain the need for these techniques in terms of his problem, which requires analysis and analytic skills common sense CANNOT be relied upon to supply. These skills of scientific inquiry are of central importance and they are the ones that must be developed in order to assure research

which will meaningfully support professional action. If this is accomplished we may be able to stop guessing about that research should be done and have a clear grasp of the topics which need to be made subjecto reflective inquiry.